

STATE OF MICHIGAN  
MICHIGAN ADMINISTRATIVE HEARING SYSTEM  
ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS FOR THE  
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

**IN THE MATTER OF:**

[REDACTED]

Reg. No: 20138407  
Issue No: 1038  
Case No: [REDACTED]  
Hearing Date: January 9, 2013  
Muskegon County DHS

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE:** Suzanne D. Sonneborn

**HEARING DECISION**

This matter is before the undersigned Administrative Law Judge pursuant to MCL 400.9 and MCL 400.37 upon Claimant's request for a hearing received by the Department of Human Services (department) on October 26, 2012. After due notice, a telephone hearing was held on January 9, 2013. Claimant appeared and provided testimony. The department was represented by [REDACTED], a family independence manager, and Dawn Ciluffo, a JET family independence specialist, both with the department's Muskegon County office. Michigan Works was represented by [REDACTED], a program analyst, and [REDACTED] a career developer.

**ISSUE**

Whether the department properly terminated and sanctioned Claimant's Family Independence Program (FIP) benefits based on Claimant's noncompliance with Work First/Jobs, Education and Training (WF/JET) requirements?

**FINDINGS OF FACT**

The Administrative Law Judge, based upon the competent, material, and substantial evidence on the whole record, finds as material fact:

1. At all times relevant to this hearing, Claimant was a recipient of FIP benefits and, as a recipient of FIP benefits, Claimant was a mandatory WF/JET participant. (Department Exhibits E, F, G)
2. On May 22, 2012, Claimant signed a document titled "Work and/or Self-Sufficiency Rules for Cash Recipients" and, in doing so, acknowledged with her signature her understanding of the requirements of the JET program including, among other things, that there are penalties for not cooperating with work or family strengthening requirements and her responsibility to report any disability or health problem or other barrier that

required accommodation for her participation in the program. (Department Exhibit H)

3. On October 19, 2012, the department mailed Claimant a Notice of Noncompliance (DHS 2444) and a Notice of Case Action for her failure to participate as required in employment and/or self-sufficiency related activities. The Notices indicated that, unless good cause was established, her FIP case would be closed effective November 1, 2012 for a three month sanction as this was Claimant's first non-compliance. The Notice of Noncompliance also scheduled a triage appointment for Claimant on October 26, 2012 at 8:30 a.m. (Department Exhibits A, C)
4. Claimant attended the October 26, 2012 triage appointment by telephone, at which time the department concluded that Claimant did not establish good cause for her noncompliance for the reason that Claimant provided no medical documentation in support of her claimed ongoing medical issues. (Department Exhibit D)
5. Effective November 1, 2012, Claimant's FIP case was closed and subject to a three-month sanction for her failure to participate as required in employment and/or self-sufficiency related activities. (Department Hearing Summary, Exhibits A, B, I)
6. On October 26, 2012, Claimant submitted a hearing request protesting the closure of her FIP case.

### **CONCLUSIONS OF LAW**

Clients have the right to contest a department decision affecting eligibility or benefit levels whenever it is believed that the decision is incorrect. The department will provide an administrative hearing to review the decision and determine the appropriateness of that decision. BAM 600. The regulations governing the hearing and appeal process for applicants and recipients of public assistance in Michigan are found in the Michigan Administrative Code, MAC R 400.901-400.951. An opportunity for a hearing shall be granted to an applicant who requests a hearing because his claim for assistance is denied. MAC R 400.903(1).

The Family Independence Program (FIP) was established pursuant to the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, Public Law 104-193, 8 USC 601, et seq. The department administers the FIP program pursuant to MCL 400.10, et seq., and MAC R 400.3101-3131. The FIP program replaced the Aid to Dependent Children (ADC) program effective October 1, 1996. Department policies are found in the Bridges Administrative Manual (BAM), the Bridges Eligibility Manual (BEM), Reference Table Manual (RFT), and the Bridges Reference Manual (BRM).

Department policy states that clients must be made aware that public assistance is limited to 48 months to meet their family's needs and that they must take personal responsibility to achieve self-sufficiency. This message, along with information on ways to achieve independence, direct support services, non-compliance penalties, and good cause reasons, is initially shared by the department when the client applies for cash assistance. Jobs, Education and Training (JET) program requirements, education and training opportunities, and assessments are covered by the JET case manager when a mandatory JET participant is referred at application. BEM 229.

Federal and State laws require each work eligible individual (WEI) in the FIP and RAP group to participate in the Jobs, Education and Training (JET) Program or other employment-related activities unless temporarily deferred or engaged in activities that meet participation requirements. These clients must participate in employment and/or self-sufficiency-related activities to increase their employability and obtain stable employment. JET is a program administered by the Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs through the Michigan Works Agencies (MWAs). The JET program serves employers and job seekers for employers to have skilled workers and job seekers to obtain jobs that provide economic self-sufficiency. A WEI who refuses, without good cause, to participate in assigned employment and/or self-sufficiency-related activities is subject to penalties. BEM 230A.

Noncompliance of applicants, recipients, or member adds means doing any of the following without good cause:

- . Failing or refusing to:
  - .. Appear and participate with the Jobs, Education and Training (JET) Program or other employment service provider.
  - .. Complete a Family Automated Screening Tool (FAST), as assigned as the first step in the FSSP process.
  - .. Develop a Family Self-Sufficiency Plan (FSSP) or a Personal Responsibility Plan and Family Contract (PRPFC).
  - .. Comply with activities assigned to on the Family Self-Sufficiency Plan (FSSP).
  - .. Provide legitimate documentation of work participation.
  - .. Appear for a scheduled appointment or meeting related to assigned activities.
  - .. Participate in employment and/or self-sufficiency-related activities.

- .. Accept a job referral.
- .. Complete a job application.
- .. Appear for a job interview (see the exception below).
- . Stating orally or in writing a definite intent not to comply with program requirements.
- . Threatening, physically abusing or otherwise behaving disruptively toward anyone conducting or participating in an employment and/or self-sufficiency-related activity.
- . Refusing employment support services if the refusal prevents participation in an employment and/or self-sufficiency-related activity. BEM 233A.

JET participants will not be terminated from a JET program without first scheduling a “triage” meeting with the client to jointly discuss noncompliance and good cause. The department coordinates the process to notify the MWA case manager of triage meetings including scheduling guidelines.

Clients can either attend a meeting or participate in a conference call if attendance at the triage meeting is not possible. If a client calls to reschedule an already scheduled triage meeting, the client is offered a telephone conference at that time. Clients must comply with triage requirement within the negative action period.

The department is required to send a DHS-2444, Notice of Employment and/or Self-Sufficiency Related Noncompliance within three days after learning of the noncompliance which must include the date of noncompliance, the reason the client was determined to be noncompliant, the penalty that will be imposed and the triage date within the negative action period. BEM 233A.

Good cause is a valid reason for noncompliance with employment and/or self-sufficiency-related activities that are based on factors that are beyond the control of the noncompliant person. A claim of good cause must be verified and documented for member adds and recipients. If it is determined at triage that the client has good cause, and good cause issues have been resolved, the client should be sent back to JET. BEM 233A.

Good cause should be determined based on the best information available during the triage and prior to the negative action date. Good cause may be verified by information already on file with DHS or MWA. Good cause must be considered even if the client does not attend, with particular attention to possible disabilities (including disabilities that have not been diagnosed or identified by the client) and unmet needs for accommodation. BEM 233A.

The penalty for noncompliance without good cause is FIP closure. Effective April 1, 2007, the following minimum penalties apply:

- . For the first occurrence on the FIP case, close the FIP for not less than 3 calendar months unless the client is excused from the noncompliance as noted in “First Case Noncompliance Without Loss of Benefits” below.
- . For the second occurrence on the FIP case, close the FIP for not less than 3 calendar months.
- . For the third and subsequent occurrence on the FIP case, close the FIP for not less than 12 calendar months.
- . The penalty counter also begins April 1, 2007 regardless of the previous number of noncompliance penalties. BEM 233A.

In this case, Claimant was required to participate in the JET/Work First program as a condition of receiving FIP benefits. On October 19, 2012, the department found that Claimant was noncompliant for failing to participate as required in employment and/or self-sufficiency related activities – specifically, the department determined that Claimant had discontinued attending and participating in Work First without an excuse or deferral. And, because the department ultimately determined that Claimant did not provide good cause for her failure to attend the JET program during her triage appointment, the department closed Claimant’s FIP case and imposed a three-month sanction due to this being Claimant’s first noncompliance.

At the January 9, 2013 hearing, Claimant acknowledged that she stopped participating in her required Work First activities for the time period in question. When questioned regarding why she did so, Claimant testified that she was having a difficult time due to her various medical issues. Claimant nonetheless acknowledged that she did not at any time inform her DHS caseworker or her JET worker of these barriers to her ability to fulfill her Work First/JET requirements.

Testimony and other evidence must be weighed and considered according to its reasonableness. *Gardiner v Courtright*, 165 Mich 54, 62; 130 NW 322 (1911); *Dep’t of Community Health v Risch*, 274 Mich App 365, 372; 733 NW2d 403 (2007). Moreover, the weight and credibility of this evidence is generally for the fact-finder to determine. *Dep’t of Community Health*, 274 Mich App at 372; *People v Terry*, 224 Mich App 447, 452; 569 NW2d 641 (1997).

This Administrative Law Judge has carefully considered and weighed the testimony and other evidence in the record and finds that, based on the competent, material, and substantial evidence presented during the hearing, because Claimant did not make the department aware of her difficulties in fulfilling her WF/JET requirements and therefore give the department the opportunity to work with her in identifying and overcoming any

barriers, Claimant has failed to show good cause for her failure to participate as required in employment and/or self-sufficiency related activities and the department properly closed and properly imposed a three-month sanction on Claimant's FIP case for her non-compliance with WF/JET requirements.

**DECISION AND ORDER**

The Administrative Law Judge, based upon the above findings of fact and conclusions of law, decides that the department properly closed and properly imposed a three-month sanction on Claimant's FIP case for her non-compliance with WF/JET requirements. The department's actions are therefore **UPHELD**.

It is **SO ORDERED**.

/s/ \_\_\_\_\_  
Suzanne D. Sonneborn  
Administrative Law Judge  
for Maura D. Corrigan, Director  
Department of Human Services

Date Signed: January 11, 2013

Date Mailed: January 14, 2013

**NOTICE:** Michigan Administrative Hearing System (MAHS) may order a rehearing or reconsideration on either its own motion or at the request of a party within 30 days of the mailing date of this Decision and Order. MAHS will not order a rehearing or reconsideration on the Department's motion where the final decision cannot be implemented within 90 days of the filing of the original request.

The Claimant may appeal this Decision and Order to Circuit Court within 30 days of the receipt of the Decision and Order or, if a timely request for rehearing was made, within 30 days of the receipt date of the rehearing decision.

Claimant may request a rehearing or reconsideration for the following reasons:

- A rehearing **MAY** be granted if there is newly discovered evidence that could affect the outcome of the original hearing decision.
- A reconsideration **MAY** be granted for any of the following reasons:
  - Misapplication of manual policy or law in the hearing decision,
  - Typographical errors, mathematical errors, or other obvious errors in the hearing decision that affect the substantial rights of Claimant;
  - The failure of the ALJ to address other relevant issues in the hearing decision.

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A request for a rehearing or reconsideration must be submitted through the local DHS office or directly to MAHS by mail at:

Michigan Administrative Hearings System  
Reconsideration/Rehearing Request  
P.O. Box 30639  
Lansing, MI 48909-07322

SDS/cr

cc:

